

Eric Guenther  
Ron Broglio  
LCC 4100  
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### Intersection of Space as a Point of Contact

The human being's relationship with other lifeforms within nature is complicated by the implication made on the human condition of being within nature itself. To the animals and by demonstration of its behavior, the human being is as rooted and entrapped within the world as the animal itself. The home is not symbolic of technological advancement or the dominance of man over nature to anything but the human thought that constructed it. Bataille says, "The animal situation does contain a component of the human situation; if need be, the animal can be regarded as a subject for which the rest of the world is an object, but it is never given the possibility of regarding itself in this way. Elements of this situation can be grasped by human intelligence, but the animal cannot realize them." (Bataille 34) Implicit in this statement is the existence of the world within a world described by human thought exclusively. Animal behavior serves as a means for temporarily dissolving these boundaries through an encounter. The human's temporary and merely sufficient existence (in terms of the animal's experience) within an animal's Umwelt places the human at the intersection of points. He or she is "like water in water" (Bataille 34) with the animal to the extent that the animal's existence removes the structure and precedent of human interaction. The animal's presence pulls the human further out of human context and history. The hierarchy found within human society differentiates us from nature in a way that ensures our identity. Contact with nature forces a return to some level of its original form, allowing for communication between disparate worlds.

In journal 1, the animal inside the porch roof understood his situation within the effect of human construction as nature. Human definitions of the boundary between nature and technology (public vs. private, city vs. home) are separate from the animal's perception and behavior. The human in an animal's world shows the same type of mirrored relationship: the invasion of space is the point of contact and the means by which this dialog between man and nature takes place. Although we cannot understand each other and this 'dialog' consists of some of the most basic means of communication: in the case of Journal 1, interaction was strictly in the realm of the sounds of scratching and movement. No visual contact was made, yet man and animal made contact in both the realm of nature and home.

The art of Olly and Suzi is an enactment of the shared space between animal and human spheres. The crossover occurs through the intersection of human technology (in this case, art) and the animal's own unpredictable but somewhat staged path. Since the animal's entry into the world of art is to some degree within the artist's control, it becomes relevant and self-conscious. As a challenge to anthropocentrism, the piece, by artist and viewer's understanding, is thinking with animals. Although the animal's individual motives and impetus are unclear in our perception, its presence exists as a means to connect with the animal. By incorporating the animal through contact, the naturalistic encounter becomes a level playing field. Steve Baker writes, "This approach, which is perhaps unusually straightforward in the context of contemporary art, undoubtedly prompts the question of whether the naturalistic representation of animals can really be called postmodern. There are compelling reasons for saying that it can." (Baker 11). By postmodern, Baker is referring to the contrast between the structured and

clearly defined 'ideal' of the animal aesthetic and the postmodern confusion of roles (artist and subject, human and animal). The novelty of this approach, which considers this interaction of spaces both the forum and the medium, creates a certain disbelief that reflects humanity's own stigma concerning the 'other' found in the animal. Baker continues, "In the incorporation of marks made by animals in some of their finished pieces, however, there is a very specific attempt to overcome viewers' postmodern sense of not knowing or believing what they are seeing." (Baker 13). Olly and Suzi use new techniques for representation and expression that are more specific and direct than what a modernist naturalist painting might be by eliminating to a degree the conventional relationship of painter to subject. In using this, it is the eyes of elements from both sides; the animal unknown and human reality. Some degree of perception and subsequent expression is presented from both sides, but always doomed to the tunnel of human-exclusive perspective. This makes any type of critical value judgment concerning an animal's contribution to the piece somewhat irrelevant. Unlike the representational perspective of past art, the value is in the execution and instance of interaction between two foreign mediums: nature and animal. It is the expression of the interfaces by which we choose to interact. To address the historical implications of this approach, Broglio writes, "We know it through contact with the surface of the animal and the surface of the animal's world or 'bubble' as Uexkull explains. Olly and Suzi work with the animal surface, its living flesh, as well as the surface of the animal bubble as it meets our own in contact zones. The resulting marks on paper are instructively different from animal portraiture and the history of animal painting". (Broglio 25). This engagement of artistic method specifically, as opposed to using the historically unilateral (and to some extent,

mutually exclusive) relationship between artist and subject, is a method of "thinking with" animals. Traces and clues on canvas point the viewer towards understanding the intersection of existence as a communal experience to be shared between our worlds.

A classic use of spatial relationships between human and animal is the idea of the cage. Negotiating the flow of physical space, 'cages', in Baker's terms, can come to mean the homes we inhabit. They protect and contain humanity while determining a certain relationship with nature. He writes, in reference to the caged animal, "Cagedness is a condition of art, an expression of art's entanglement with desire, and a means of addressing that desire." (Baker 129). This is also relevant to the condition of the human being within technology. It is the reverse of the animal's status as 'caged' - humanity is instead on display for nature. Our defined spaces reveal identity. It presents "Cagedness [as] an effect of art, a means of rendering the animal evident" (Baker 129). Purpose and mutual identification is suggested by the use of the metaphor of the 'cage'. The animal and human share a 'becoming', as Deleuze and Guattari would suggest, by simultaneously serving purpose within the world of the other.

The experience of the animal in its encounter with an instance of human technology occurs and serves our understanding of our own anthropocentrism. It is the forum by which we are able to "think with animals", to some degree with an understanding of their particular world. Technology's existence within the larger realm of nature itself causes this friction by giving both the human and animal common thinking ground; in this case the home. The human being "thinks with animals" by sharing perception and space.

## Works Cited

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